RIGHT OFF THE BAT

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WILLIAM F. KIRK

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RIGHT OFF THE BAT

BASEBALL BALLADS

By
WILLIAM F. KIRK

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
H. B. MARTIN

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

(These verses originally appeared in the New York Evening Journal, and are here reprinted through the courtesy of the National News Association.)

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Right Off The Bat

TO

JOHN J. McGRAW

THE SCHOOLMASTER
OF BASEBALL

2130668

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Right Off the Bat

JOHN BOURBON, PITCHER

THEY tell me that Matty can pitch like a fiend,
But many long years before Matty was weaned
I was pitching to players, and good players, too,
Mike Kelley and Rusie and all the old crew.
Red Sockalexis, the Indian star,
Breitenstein, Clancy, McGill and McGarr.
Matty a pitcher? Well, yes, he may be,
But where in the world is a pitcher like me?

My name is John Bourbon, I'm old, and yet young;
I cannot keep track of the victims I've stung.
I've studied their weaknesses, humored their whims,
Muddled their eyesight and weakened their limbs,
Bloated their faces and dammed up their veins,
Rusted their joints and beclouded their brains.
Matty a pitcher? Well, yes, he may be,
But where in the world is a pitcher like me?

I have pitched to the stars of our national game,
I have pitched them to ruin and pitched them to shame.
They laughed when they faced me, so proud of their
strength,
Not knowing, poor fools, I would get them at length.
I have pitched men off pinnacles scaled in long years.
I have pitched those they loved into oceans of tears.
Matty a pitcher? Well, yes, he may be,
But where in the world is a pitcher like me?

SUNDAY BASEBALL

THE East Side Slashers were playing the Terrors,
Piling up hits, assists and errors;
Far from their stuffy tenement homes
That cluster thicker than honeycombs,
They ran the bases like busy bees,
Fanned by the Hudson's cooling breeze.

Mrs. Hamilton-Marshall-Gray,
Coming from church, chanced to pass that way.
She saw the frolicking urchins there,
Their shrill cries splitting the Sabbath air.
"Mercy!" she murmured, "this must stop!"
Then promptly proceeded to call a cop;
And the cop swooped down on the luckless boys,
Stopping their frivolous Sunday joys.

Mrs. Hamilton-Marshall-Gray
Spoke to her coachman and drove away
Through beautiful parks, o'er shady roads,
Past splashing fountains and rich abodes.
Reaching her home, she was heard to say
"How awful to break the Sabbath day!"

The Slashers and Terrors, side by side,
Started their stifling subway ride
Down through the city, ever down
To the warping walls of Tenement Town.
Reaching their homes, the troublesome tots
Crept away to their shabby cots
And dreamed of the grass and the droning bees,
The pure, cool air and the waving trees,
And how they had played their baseball game
Till the Beautiful Christian Lady came.

THE BIG LEAGUE

YOU want to play in the Big League, boy?
I guess that you will some day,
For you've shown the speed the managers need
And the lightning brain (the managers' creed),
And the heart that will bid you stay.

But when you go to the Big League, boy,
And play on the Big League grounds,
As the seasons roll you will pay the toll
From your fresh young nerves and your clean young soul,
Till your pulse less buoyantly bounds.

And you'll learn strange things in the Big League, boy,
The cream of the good and bad;
You will come to know, in that shifting show,
The things that I learned in the long ago
When I, too, was a careless lad.

For I came to play in the Big League, boy,
And I played my string to the end.
To eyes divine where the white lights shine
I mumbled toasts over bubbling wine—
And finished minus a friend.

You want to play in the Big League, boy?
  I guess that you will, some day,
And this is the prayer of an old-time player—
None was stronger and none was gayer—
  God help you along your way.

THE BALLAD OF THE MINOR LEAGUER

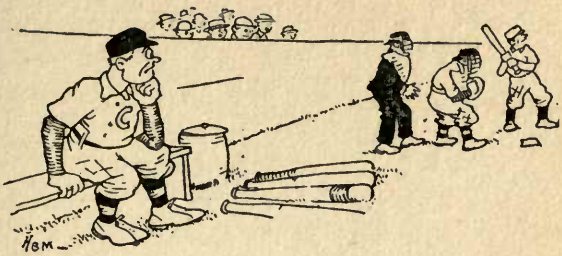
HE came here in the early Spring with all the try-
out mob,
Striving to bat like Wagner and to slide (spikes
first) like Cobb.
Some of the vets cried, "Bonehead!" Others remarked,
"Poor zob!"

Modest as Spring's arbutus, calm as an April dawn,
He asked for no advances though his ticker was in pawn;
He learned the law from Jawn McGraw but never called
him "Jawn."

He graced the bench until July, leading the simple life—
He wouldn't touch a cocktail once to please a schoolmate's
wife;
The slightest hint of a "creme de mint" would cut him
like a knife.

The village smith that stood beneath the spreading chestnut
tree
Had nothing on this youngster in the dodging of a spree.
Others could tipple if they would—not for Recruit McGee.

Thus did the minor leaguer seek for affluence and fame—
Virtue's its own reward at times, but oft it pulls up lame.
Now he has went back to the place from which he once
had came!



BALLADE OF A SUBSTITUTE

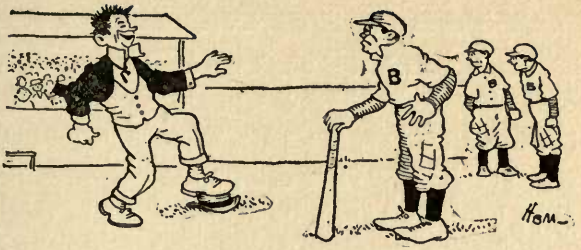
I'VE been here nearly a season now,
Watching the regulars, day after day;
I wish some wizard would tell me how
To break right into the game and stay.
It isn't as if I were some thick jay,
Like a lot of those clumsy "Class B" flivvers,
But I'm glued to the bench so hard that, say—
The seat of my pants is full of slivers.

McGill is a terrible lobbygow,
But he's drawing a regular shortstop's pay;
He romps around like a crippled cow
And shows the speed of a two-ton dray.
Night after night I kneel and pray
For a chance to work with the real high livers,
But I guess I'll sub till my hair turns gray—
The seat of my pants is full of slivers.

Clancy ought to be steering a plow
  Back on the farm near old Green Bay;
He's playing third, with his slanting brow;
  And Dugan ought to be pitching hay.
  The bulls they've made since the first of May
Would give a McGraw one million shivers,
  But it's "stay on the bench!" for Kid O'Shay,
The seat of my pants is full of slivers.

"ENVY"

Manager, pardon this mournful bray,
  But my pride is hurt and my conscience quivers;
Give me one chance in the thick of the fray—
  The seat of my pants is full of slivers.

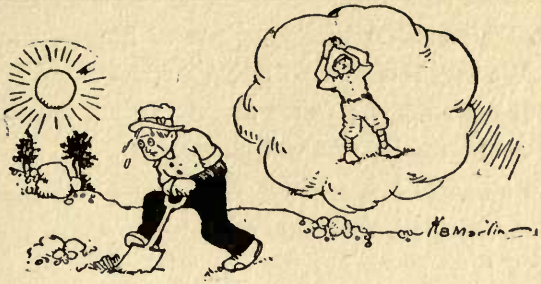


CASEY ON A BAT

IT looked extremely rocky for the Boston team that day,
The score was one to nothing, with one inning left to play.
Casey, who played in centre field, had shown an hour too late—
He hadn't any alibi when staggering through the gate.
So when he tore his necktie off and stepped upon his hat
The manager looked grim and said, "It's Casey on a bat."

"Well," said the Boston manager, "with joy I ought to scream—
Here's Casey with a dandy load, the best man on the team.
He told me he was sober, but he couldn't quite get by
When he stepped upon his derby and was yanking off his tie.
Of all the hard luck in the world! The mean, ungrateful rat!
A blooming championship at stake and Casey on a bat."

Two Boston batters in the ninth were speedily retired,
"Here, Casey!" cried the manager, speaking as one inspired,
"Go in and bat for Grogan! There's a man on second base,
And if you hit the way you can we'll win the pennant race."
This is no knock on buttermilk, or anything like that,
But the winning hit was made that day by Casey on a bat.



THE PITCHER'S SOLILOQUY

A PITCHER known in the days gone by
As a star of the first degree
Was making the dirt and gravel fly
In the shade of an old oak tree.
His spade was long and his arm was strong,
And the ditch that he dug was wide;
He paused at the sound of the dinner gong—
And this is the sermon he sighed:

"Young man, you are climbing the ladder now—
Your arm is as firm as steel;
The wreath of laurel is on your brow
And the pride of a prince you feel.
Do you think you will play when your hair turns gray?
I thought my prowess would last,
But you can't strike out the men of to-day
With the curves you threw in the past!"

In the merciless baseball game of life
  We may shine for a fleeting hour,
But the strongest frame comes to shun the strife
  And loses its youthful power.
So strive to lay, while it comes your way,
  A fence for Adversity's blast.
You can't strike out the men of to-day
  With the curves you threw in the past.

BLESSED BE BASEBALL

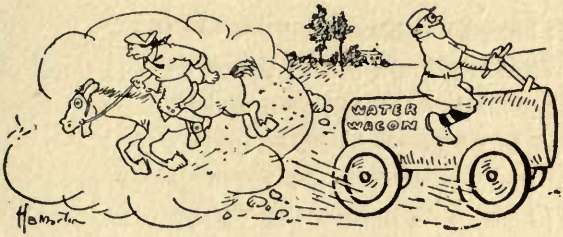
THE game was on! The cheers and roars
Rang Eastward to Long Island's shores;
"Come on, you Matty—show your class!"
"Oh, you Red Murray! Scorch the grass!"

"Heads up, Big Injun!" "Scoop 'em, Bridwell!"
"Devore stole home! And sure he slid well!"
These and a thousand other roars
Rang Eastward to Long Island's shores.

And folks of various sorts were there
From East Side yeggs to ladies fair;
Here a tragedian, there a joker,
Here a banker and there a broker.
Young dry goods clerks with booze clerks mingled,
And all sat in with nerves that tingled.

One white-haired woman sat alone,
Proud as a queen upon her throne.
One dear old lady, calm, sedate,
Age, very likely, eighty-eight.
"Isn't she sweet?" the women said;
"Look at that lovely silvery head!"

As in the sun she serenely basked
A rooter sitting beside her asked:
"How did you come to get away?"
"My grandson," she answered, "died to-day!"



RAYMOND'S RIDE

LISTEN, dear rooters, and you shall hear
Of the ride of a modern Paul Revere.
The Paul Revere of "seventy-five"
Rode like a fiend and won in a drive.
The Paul Revere whose praises I sing
Is Arthur Raymond, the spitball king.

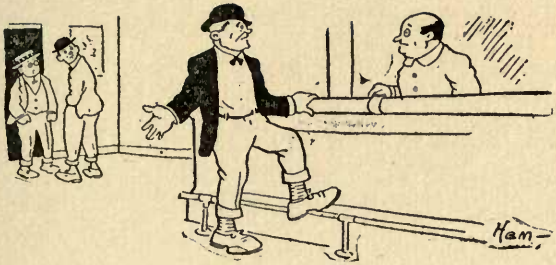
No plunging charger, no Arab steed,
Loans to Raymond its wondrous speed,
No dainty thoroughbred, sleek of side,
Plays a part in our Raymond's ride.
Just a lumbering wagon, creaking and shaking
Serves for the wonderful ride he's taking.
And it hustles him over hollow and hill,
Drawn by a good old horse named WILL.

It bumps like blazes and swerves like sin
When it nears a bar or passes an inn;
It jerks like the tail of a crazy kite
When a brewery looms on the left or right.
When it nears The Coop or The Rooters' Rest
It bucks as a mustang bucks out West.
But, calmly refusing to get a jag on,
Raymond clings to that water wagon.

* * *

To Revere's great feat you may point with pride,
But Raymond is riding a greater ride.*

*This is only a spring poem.



FOUR CONVERSATIONS

"I USED to have 'em buffaloed when I was with Duluth,
Out in that dinky pine tree league, and here's the honest truth:
This Mathewson ain't better. Say, the benders that I slung
Had all the sluggers swinging till they'd almost bust a lung.
I'll get 'em just the same right here—McGraw knows I can't lose."
Said the Pitcher to the Barboy up at Paddy Donahue's.

"I lost a tough game yesterday, but that don't make me sad;
Believe me, I had everything—they walloped all I had.
I didn't get no swell support; my catcher crossed me twice
And all the infield acted like a wagon full of ice.
They all support this Mathewson. When I go in we lose!"
Said the Pitcher to the Barboy up at Paddy Donahue's.

"I've been here just two months to-day, and things are looking black;
I lost a tough one yesterday, and now I've got the sack.
Say, everyone's against me, kid. My curve is breaking great,
But four guys slammed it yesterday clear to the left field gate.
Now I'm released—you hear me? Released with run-down shoes!"
Said the Pitcher to the Barboy up at Paddy Donahue's.

* * *

"Get out of here, you rummy! I can't hand you no more booze!"
Said the Barboy to the Pitcher up at Paddy Donahue's.

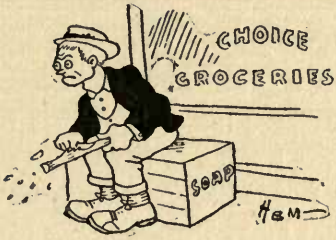
"INSIDE" BASEBALL

(The warden of one of the State penitentiaries has begun a system of Saturday half holidays for the convicts, a baseball game on the prison grounds being the main feature.)

YOU talk of "inside" baseball and of managerial plans,
Of signs and mental flashes that are Greek to all the fans;
You tell of wondrous brainwork, such as Evers used to use
When he wasn't in his shoe store, selling patent leather shoes.
I've seen some "inside" baseball in the various big league towns,
And seen some "inside" pitching by the Mathewsons and Browns,
But the finest "inside" baseball I have seen in many a day
Is inside the dear old prison, where they like to have me stay.

The Yeggmen lead the league just now—that team is full
of tricks;
They beat the Con Men yesterday by seventeen to six.
The Lifers have an outside chance to win the prison flag;
The Counterfeiters still have hopes, although they seldom
brag.
The pitcher for the Grafters, namely, Alderman McGee,
Has bet his good behavior that they'll finish one, two, three.
Yes, the finest "inside" baseball I have seen in many a day
Is inside the dear old prison, where they like to have me
stay.

The game we had last Saturday was sure a corking sight;
The Yeggmen beat the Grafters, but the Grafters made
them fight.
McGee, the Grafters' pitcher, had to hide his head in
shame—
He tried to bribe the warden, who was umpiring the game.
If Saturday's a pleasant day for outside games like ball
The Con Men play the Lifers, and we'll be there, one and
all.
For the finest "inside" baseball I have seen in many a day
Is inside the dear old prison, where they like to have me
stay.

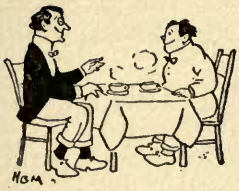


THE DIFFERENCE

"IT'S just this way," said Danny O'Shay,
As he whittled a stick and the hours away,
"A player can booze for a year or two,
The same as me or the same as you.
You meet a ball-gamer now and then
Who can guzzle more than the most of men.
But sooner or later he has to go
The way I was chased from the big league show.

"The difference, kid," said Danny O'Shay,
"Between the hard and the easy way,
As far as ball players goes, at least,
Is a difference big as the West and East.
I played ten years before I was spurned,
And this is the lesson your uncle learned:
The boozer THINKS he is splitting the wood,
The man that is sober KNOWS he's good.

"You see," continued Danny O'Shay,
"A dog and a man must have his day.
I played like a demon for seven years,
'Till I switched to whiskey and quit my beers.
I laughed at the friends that steered me right,
But here's the difference, black and white:
The boozer THINKS he is splitting the wood,
The man that is sober KNOWS he's good."



CRICKET AND BASEBALL

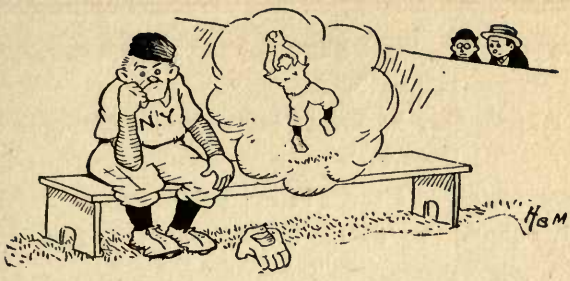
THE cricket game was over and the sun was sinking low,
The players in their blazers plodded homeward in a row.
They stopped within the clubhouse for a final cup of tea,
When up spake Captain Edgerton to Bowler Basil Fee:

"Jolly well tried, old chap!
You lost as the greatest can;
But whether you win or whether you lose
You're always a gentleman.
Have a Scotch and soda, old fellow—
It will drive off the blooming blues;
Keep up your stride, you jolly well tried,
And a man can't always lose."

The baseball game was over and the home team had been skinned,
The players slunk across the field while sundry knockers grinned;

They hurried to the clubhouse for a bath and change of garb,
When up spake Manager McDuff, and each word was a barb:

"Fine lot of high-priced athletes!
Most of you ain't alive!
I could pick a team from the Soldiers' Home
And beat you four out of five.
Be out here at ten to-morrow—
That goes the way that it lays;
Any mixed-ale sport that doesn't report
Will squat on the bench ten days!"



THE LEAGUE OF LONG AGO

THEY'VE got me sitting on the bench—I knew it had to come—
Kid Casey subbed for me at third the day I broke my thumb;
My thumb got better fast enough, but when I wanted back,
"The Kid is stinging them a mile," says good old Captain Mack.
"The Kid is running bases like a Murray or a Cobb,
The Kid does this, the Kid does that, the Kid is on the job."
And so I'm sitting on the bench, my spirits sort o' low,
And playing memory ball games in the League of Long Ago.

I'm pulling for Kid Casey, and I hope he makes a mint,
I help him every way I can, from cussword down to hint;
He knows that I am for him, too—'twas only yesterday

He says to me, "Old leaguer, you've got ten more years
to play."
But I know that he knows better, and I know just what
I'm worth—
A man can't last forever in the swiftest game on earth.
And so I'm sitting on the bench, my spirits sort o' low,
And playing memory ball games in the League of Long
Ago.

I played with Old Buck Ewing just before Buck blew the
game,
I played with Jimmy Ryan in the days of Anson's fame.
Then I was just a fresh young kid, and they were getting
old,
But not one slur they gave me when I broke into the fold.
That's why I like Kid Casey, and I'll plug like sin for him,
I told Mack only yesterday my eyes were getting dim.
And so I'm sitting on the bench, my spirits sort o' low,
And playing memory ball games in the League of Long
Ago.

THE LONGEST HIT ON RECORD

I'VE heard of hits by Wagner, hits that scaled the left field fence,
I've read about full many a clout tremendous and immense;
I know about that old time wheeze where Ryan hit a ball
That lit upon a steamer due in London late that Fall.
But the longest hit on record was a hit by Dan O'Shay
When the Bankers played the Brokers just five years ago to-day.

Dan played left field or right field, I can't remember which,
But when it came to batting—well, Dan had the batter's itch.
His fellow brokers often said—perhaps they did but joke—
They spent their all repairing baseball fences Danny broke.
But the longest hit Dan ever made, as I set out to say,
Was made against the Bankers just five years ago to-day.

A banker named O'Connor waited out in centre field
When Dan O'Shay came to the plate, his nerves all calm
and steeled.
Dan hit the ball an awful soak, O'Connor clenched his
teeth,
And after quite a fearsome sprint, the ball he got beneath.
Just as he caught the pellet two detectives hove in sight;
He put the ball inside his shirt and told the gang "GOOD
NIGHT!"

He ran to far-off Labrador, the land of ice and snow,
And everywhere O'Connor went the ball was sure to go.
From there he went to Canada, from there he made Bengal,
Then journeyed he to Mandalay, accompanied by that ball.
And then he tried Australia, seeking diamonds in the dirt,
But all the time he kept that ball he'd hidden in his shirt.

He didn't like Australia, so he trekked to many a land,
From Greenland's icy mountains clear to India's coral
strand.
He sweltered in strange deserts, onward, onward, day by
day,
But always kept that baseball hit so hard by Dan O'Shay.
If you ever go to Sing Sing, which I hope you never will,
You'll find O'Connor in a cell with that same horsehide pill.

* * *

Yes, the longest hit on record was a hit by Dan O'Shay,
When the Bankers played the Brokers, just five years ago
to-day.

THE UMPIRE'S HOME

WHERE does an umpire live? You ask me that?
Come, I will take you to an umpire's flat.
Ah! Here we are! 'Tis five flights up, behind;
Umpires are used to hiding—they don't mind.
This is the entrance. It's a bachelor's den,
For umpires aren't often married men.
The owner's not at home, but come with me;
I know him well and have an extra key.

This is the library; note well the books,
Dingy and dismal, like the umpire's looks.
"Lives of the Martyrs," "The Deserted Home,"
"Dante's Inferno," "Rise and Fall of Rome."
"Paradise Lost," "The Sinking of the Maine,"
"Ballad of Reading Gaol," and "Souls in Pain."
"The Death of Joan of Arc," "The Convict's Woe,"
And all the works of Edgar Allen Poe.

This is the dining room, all done in black,
With rugs of drab and tapestries of sack
Notice the mottoes on the gloomy walls:
"Drink to the countless strikes that I called balls,"
"A toast to all the close ones that I miss,"
"A curse upon the man who loves to hiss!"
Where does an umpire live? You ask me that?
Well, I have shown you through an umpire's flat.

"YELLOW"

HE WASN'T a strong looking fellow,
And roughnecks played ball in those days;
The ballgamers christened him "Yellow"
Because of his mild, timid ways.
Red Flynn slapped his face to a whisper
One day when he missed a fly ball,
And his jaw almost broke when he got a swell soak
From the fist of Outfielder McCall.

I used to feel sorry for "Yellow,"
The gang made his life one long moan.
He wasn't a strong looking fellow,
They ought to have let him alone.
I've found, in my baseball excursions,
From Maine to the parks way out West,
That the players who win and draw down the tin,
Are the players who throw out the chest.

But courage is courage, I reckon;
It's hard to explain, but it's true;
And sometimes a fellow that people call yellow

Turns out to be brave and true blue.
One day when a hit meant a pennant
Our "Yellow" came up to the bat;
Did he quit in the pinch? Did he falter and flinch?
Sure he did. He struck out like a rat!

THE UMPIRE

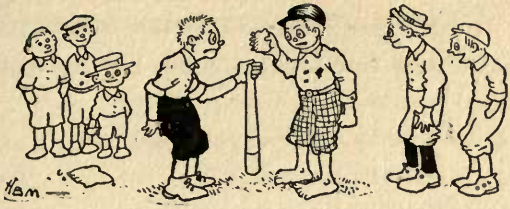
HE WAS tall and rugged and coated with tan,
He asked no odds and he feared no man.
When he shouted "Strike!" or yelped "Ball Two!"
You can wager it went, and went clear through.
Seldom he argued, and never he fined
The player who cursed or the player who whined,
But he ran the game from beginning to end,
Knew no mercy and feared no friend.

Six years in the league he remained the same,
Sneering at kickers and bossing the game,
Snapping at roughnecks who made foolish howls,
Slapping them, sometimes, fair on the jowls;
Taking no talk, always making good,
He ran the game as an umpire should,
Till every paper and every fan
Allowed that Flynn was a fearless man.

Flynn weighed two hundred, ringside weight,
His sweet little wife weighed a hundred and eight;
But when he finished the daily game
And home to his small apartment came
It was "Mike, you're late!" and "Stay in the flat!"
"Mike, do this!" and "Mike, do that!"
'Twas surely a shame, and almost a sin,
The way that she bullied the fearless Flynn.

* * *

Kipling knew nothing concerning the Flynns
  When he wrote about "bearing the yoke."
A woman is only a woman, perhaps,
  But an umpire's only a joke.



"CHOOSING SIDES"

BASEBALL, they say, has changed a heap; I guess it has, in spots,
And yet I liked it better when we played it on the lots.
There were no signs for "hit and run," no dazzling "fade-aways";
We had no high-priced managers to tell us fancy plays.
No, we were just a lot of kids, with tanned and freckled hides;
There were no concrete grand stands when we played at "choosing sides."

I saw a ball game yesterday, and o'er a brass band's blare
The cheers of thirty thousand fans were soaring through the air.
The turnstiles had been clicking for three solid golden hours,

Recording wealth and profit for the big league baseball powers.
How soon we lose our play days! How swiftly childhood glides!
There were no clicking turnstiles when we played at "choosing sides."
The captains used to toss a bat, and then, hand over hand—
But why repeat a story every boy must understand?
Then came the careful picking—"I'll take Reddy." "Give me Flynn."
"I'll choose you, Skinny Murphy." "I'll take you, Pat McGinn."
They picked the live ones first, of course, and finished with the snides;
Feelings were often ruffled when we played at "choosing sides."

Dear reader, you'll remember, if you peek into the past,
The little four-eyed fellow that was always chosen last.
The little weak-kneed urchin that the captain would ignore
Until he found by counting, that he needed one man more.
He couldn't bat, he couldn't field, and yet that shrimp to-day
Is making laws in Congress, while his captain drives a dray.

ODE TO A GEORGIA GENT

A SHUDDER ran around Forbes Field
When Tyrus Cobb stole home.
The brain of Honus Wagner reeled
When Tyrus Cobb stole home.
Manager Clarke his temples clasped,
The Pirate rooters simply gasped—
Their tenderest feelings had been rasped
When Tyrus Cobb stole home.

The Pirate pitcher's heart stood still
When Tyrus Cobb stole home.
Gibson, the catcher, had a chill
When Tyrus Cobb stole home.
Large gobs of smoke began to crawl
Across the ball yard, like a pall,
And gloom was brooding over all
When Tyrus Cobb stole home.

The rooters from Detroit went mad
  When Tyrus Cobb stole home.
A very pleasant time was had
  When Tyrus Cobb stole home.
Small wonder that they shouted so;
In Hughey Jennings's town, we know,
The burglar list is sure to grow
  Since Tyrus Cobb stole home.

LIFE AND BASEBALL

WINTER howled around the corners of the old-time grocery store,
Where the baseball star was sitting, giving out his baseball lore.
Every day he told the neighbors in his little Western town
How he hit the curves of Matty and the shoots of Miner Brown.
"No, I ain't signed up this season," he would tell the gaping throng,
"And I won't sign boys, believe me, till the check looks good and strong.
John T. Brush knows where to find me, and he knows I'll play the game
When I get a good fat contract"—but the contract never came.

"Maybe I'll go South to Texas," said a gawky young recruit,
"If the contract that they send me names a salary that will suit.
Why, they're crazy for new talent; all the papers tell me so,
And your little Uncle Dudley isn't out to skip the dough.

I can play that third sack, fellows, just as well as Devlin can,
And I won't take half a paycheck, when I'm every inch a man.
When I get my kind of contract, I'll jump out and grab the fame,
Not till then will I get busy"—but the contract never came.

Life is but a game of baseball, with its players everywhere;
Some are sulking in their wigwams, some are out to do and dare.
Some are working, working, working, turning labor into fun;
Others talk of future conquests, and depart with nothing done.
Far beyond the clouds and sunlight dwells a magnate wondrous kind,
With a million, million contracts always waiting to be signed.
Yours, my friend, the task of trying; yours alone the bitter blame,
If you tell, when life is ebbing, how the contract never came.

WHAT HAPPENED TO HILO

HORATIO HILO was a bird,
He used to romp from first to third
On any kind of single.
He played the sun-field like a master,
You never saw a fielder faster,
And oh, how he could bingle!

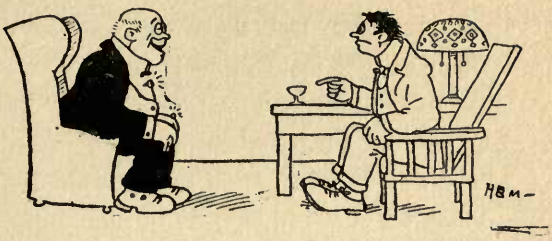
Horatio Hilo played out West,
Where man develops to his best,
And Eastern scouts all watched him;
They trailed him through the month of June,
They said, "Him for the big league soon,"
And finally they cotched him.

Horatio joined a big league team,
Thus gratifying boyhood's dream,
And got the rooters rooting;
He was the captain of the crew
At spearing flies and ground balls, too;
He never thought of booting.

One night when Jack Frost whispered zero,
A man named Fletcher met our hero
  And offered him a salary
So large and thick and fat and round
That it would reach from near the ground
  Clear to the upper gallery.

Horatio listened, felt the clutch,
And subsequently got in Dutch,
  His former chieftain fired him.
The chieftain watched his bowed down head,
And, asked for explanation, said
  Horatio tired him.

"All right!" Horatio said, "you betcher
I'll go and get some coin from Fletcher,"
  But he was snubbed that morning.
So, baseball players, if you're wise,
And think you'd like to Fletcherize,
  Hark to the Gypsy's warning!



I WAS WITH CLARKE

"I WAS with Clarke," the pitcher said
To the Pittsburg millionaire.
The rich man bowed his silvery head
To the pitcher standing there.
"Enough, good man! Give me your mitt!
Walk right in, I implore.
Fred Clarke or any friend of his
Finds here an open door."

"I was with Clarke," the pitcher said.
"Never mind," the rich man cried.
"Right over there is a Morris chair—
Come, sit you by my side.
And so you pitched for Clarke. Well, well!
Try a flagon of this wine,
For any friend of Frederick Clarke
Is sure a friend of mine."

"I was with Clarke," the twirler said.
  "So you told me," said his host.
"Fill up your glass, and let me pass
  The best cigar I boast."
"As I was saying," the pitcher cried,
  Taking a puff and sip,
"As I was saying, I was with Clarke
  On one Spring training trip!"

Then from his cozy seat arose
  That Pittsburg millionaire.
He grabbed the stranger by the nose
  And yanked him from his chair.
And then he closed the truthful eyes
  And split the lower lip
Of the man who was with Frederick Clarke
  On one Spring training trip.

"HOME FOLKS"

"STRANGER, give me a chaw of terbaccer,"
Came from the lanky Georgia "cracker."
"Know Ty Cobb? Wal, you bet we do!
Desperate youngster, tough clear through!
This is his home, but we ain't too proud.
We hope he'll stay with that Dee-troit crowd.
From all we hear, he spends his nights
Roamin' the streets and havin' fights.
And when he's playin', from what folks say,
He spikes a baserunner every day.
Stranger, we're all his father's friends,
But them wild young blades all strikes bad ends!"

"Is this where Mathewson lives?" I asked
Of a peaceful person, who calmly basked
Up on the side of a sunny hill
O'erlooking the town of Factoryville.
"He was born here, stranger," the native said.
"What is the matter? Is he dead?

I wouldn't be sorry, to tell the truth,
For there is a mighty swelled up youth!
They tell me, those that follows them things,
Matty is one of baseball's kings.
That's a knock for him and his folks, I say,
'Cause baseball is crooked, anyway!"

Then I went to the home of John McGraw,
And hearkened well to the natives' jaw.
They mentioned John in a manner grim,
And told of all that they had on him.
And I went to the home of François Chance,
Hearing them give their idol the lance.
And to many another home I went,
Finding this truth to be evident:
He who wins fame by moving away
To a big league town will be wise to stay!

THE OUTFIELDER'S DREAM

WILD was the night, yet a wilder night
Hung 'round the fielder's pillow,
For he dreamt that night of his wondrous might
With the ash, also known as the willow.
A few fond cockroaches lingered near,
From the mouldy moulding pouring;
They knew, by the sounds that smote the ear,
That the hard hitting demon was snoring.

They knew by the way he floundered there,
By the murmurs hastily spoken,
That he dreamed a bit of his home run hit
The day that the fence was broken.
They knew that he dreamed of his record grand,
His wonderful batting and fielding,
That he always hit safe when Ty Cobb fanned,
That he had the pitchers yielding.

Wild was the night in the farming town,
  Wild as the wildest battle,
Then the father's voice rang out, "Come down
  And feed them gol dern cattle!"
The cockroaches back to the moulding crept,
  The sleeper rose from the clover;
And into his boots he deftly leapt—
  The outfielder's dream was over.

THE LAW OF AVERAGES

The Winter League is here again, and in his native town
The hero of a thousand games has quietly settled down.

* * *

SPIKE MULLIGAN, the shortstop brave, who led
the league in hitting,
And drew one thousand bones a month for tending
to his knitting,
Is working in the corner store, slaving to beat the band,
And drawing fifteen seeds a month for selling sugared sand.
O'Halloran, the pitcher, who was certainly a hummer,
And got a prince's ransom for the work he did last Summer,
Is keeping books this Winter for a shop that deals in
buckets,
And getting for the same each month as much as twenty
ducats.
McGonnigal, the fielder fleet, who hit like mad all season,
And got a monthly envelope that seemed beyond all reason,
Is driving team in Grangerville, and adding to his hoard
By drawing down a salary of five a week and board.

McGinn, the famous backstop, who could throw so well
to bases,
And who received last season fifty-seven hundred aces,
Is throwing cordwood on a sled, far from the rooters' gaze,
And getting eighteen dollars cash for every thirty days.

* * *

The Winter League is here again, and in his native town
The hero of a thousand games has quietly settled down.

A CONVERTED ROOTER

SAY, on the level, fellows, just a year ago to-day
I wouldn't give a nickel for to watch them Yankees play;
The Joints was good enough for me, and since I was a kid
I hustled to the Polo Grounds and seen each stunt they did.
Yankees? Well, say, I couldn't see the Yankees with a glass;
I'd always say their style of play was very much high grass.

Yes, it was all the Polo Grounds—I never missed a game;
I'd go if I was blind and deaf and paralyzed and lame.
When Matty pitched I'd lose my head and outlung all the boys—
The ushers put me out once, when I made too blame much noise.
When Farrell's club was here instead, I used to go to Coney,
Because I always figgered that the Yanks was only phony.

But, say! I've changed my mind a lot, and that's no show-
girl's dream;
If Farrell hadn't been all white, the Joints would be no
team.
They didn't have no home at all after the fire that time,
But Farrell says, "Use my grounds, boys; I hope it helps
you climb."
A guy that does a thing like that, without no hot-air mush,
Can have my fifty cents a day, the same as John T. Brush!

TO THE LADY BUGS

LADY BUG, Lady Bug, don't you fly home—
Stay till the ninth ere deciding to roam;
Don't you despair when the outlook seems blue,
Be a game Lady Bug—see the game through!

"Why does that man wear those things on his shins?"
"How can we tell, when it's over, who wins?"
"Which is the umpire? Tell me, George, please,
And what do they mean when they call him a cheese?"
"Isn't that Matty, that little boy there?
What—that's the bat boy? Well, I do declare!"
"Why do they throw to that man on first base?"
"Hasn't that Indian got a fine face?"
"What do they mean when they yell at each other?"
"Don't you think Wiltse looks just like my brother?"

"Can't I keep score just as well without paper?"
"See Mister Latham, the way he can caper!"
"Isn't this grand? I could come here at noon!"
"Well, I declare! Is it over so soon?"

Lady Bug, Lady Bug, feathers and fuss,
Ask all the questions you want to of us.
Maybe we'll kid you, but, please, don't you care;
Baseball is better because you are there.

POLO IN ARIZONA

"HOW are you, pal?" said Phoenix Phil, when he saw me late last night;
"I'm back from the polo game," said I, "let's go and get a bite."
"These polo games are funny enough," said my Arizona friend,
"With all their swell society folks and style without no end;
But a polo game worth hiking sixty thousand miles to see
Was a game we played on the desert once," said Phoenix Phil to me.

"An English guy with an extra eye," said my Arizona friend,
"Had taught us the game of polo, from beginning clean to end.
The Prescott Kid on Old Katydid was the star we banked on most,
For the Kid was cool as a pickle and fast as a midnight ghost.
Old Katydid, Kid's pet bronco, was smarter than 'K. & E.,'
Which is saying a lot for a bucking horse," said Phoenix Phil to me.

"Well, the English guy with the extra eye picked a team
of his English pals,
And we played a game of polo for the Phoenix boys and
gals.
But the game ain't more than started when the Prescott
Kid gets gay
And into the thick of the playing he bucks with his outlaw
gray.
Them English was game as pebbles, but they broke and
then they hid,
Which wouldn't surprise you much, pal, if you saw Old
Katydid.

* * *

"Polo here in the East is fine, where hosses has pedigree,
But Old Katydid was the break-up Kid," said Phoenix
Phil to me.

THE LADDIES' LEAGUE

THE Grown-up Fan, a wealthy man, sat in his grandstand seat,
Gray hair and worry for his head, gout for his puffy feet.
Watching the New York Giants beat the Cincinnati team,
He closed his eyes an instant and he dreamed a lightning dream.
The horsehide spheres changed suddenly to battered ten-cent balls,
And spotless uniforms of white became blue overalls.

Gone were the high-priced athletes with the letters on their breasts;
A lot of urchins showed instead, minus their coats and vests—
No blue-clad umpire ran the game with frown and raucous yell—
The kids just ran the game themselves, and ran it mighty well.
"One Old Cat" and a slivered bat and shanks that scorned fatigue
Were quite the whole equipment in the famous Laddies' League.

"It's funny," said the Grown-up Fan, his vagrant vision
o'er,
"But baseball of this high-class type is something of a bore.
Maybe it's all too flawless as they run the game to-day—
It doesn't grip me, somehow, like the games we used to
play."
The Grown-up Fan, a worn old man, began his homeward
climb
With memories of the Laddies' League that bars us all
in time.

THE $11,000 BEAUTY

OF COURSE, McGraw is always wrong—he never picks a winner.
That's why the Giant's backers never have the price for dinner.
His record as a manager is one long trail of blunders—
He always kept the dead ones and he always canned the wonders.
For three long years, with hoots and jeers, the rooters cried: "You boob!
Why don't you fire this Marquard?" But McGraw stood pat on "Rube."

McGraw has often kept young chaps when rooters shouted "Sell them!"
He never tells the rooters why, and doesn't have to tell them.
He doesn't like a lobster, and, believe me, Alexander,
He wasn't on a dead one when he kept that big left-hander.
You've no idea how many fans called John McGraw a boob
For letting other youngsters go and standing pat on "Rube."

Rich merchants criticised McGraw in terms that were unkind—
Merchants with lazy shipping clerks and men that robbed them blind.
But Mac just smiled and held his peace. He should have said: "Don't whine!
Mismanage your own business, boys, and let me *manage* mine!"
When Matty's cunning goes at last—all arms in time must tire—
He'll leave a great successor in the boy Mac wouldn't fire.

THE LAY OF THE NEW YORK FAN

YES, the baseball season's over and the geese are flying South;
Giants count their winnings gaily, Yanks are frothing at the mouth.
Glancing o'er the season's records, looking at the layout now,
Nothing seems to bring deep furrows to my pale and thoughtful brow.
True, we didn't win the pennant as we did in days of yore
For the Yankees couldn't stop 'em and the Giants couldn't score,
But the New York fans must chuckle (you can get this at a glance)
When they think of the Athletics and of Peerless Leader Chance.

Oh, the Cubs of other seasons, how they made us writhe and curse!
How they made us leave the ball yard moving slowly, a la hearse.

Oh you Sheckard, oh you Schulte, oh you great Three
Fingered Brown,
Oh you little shortstop Tinker, idol of Chicago town!
We have followed all your doings, we have seen you going
back,
And to-night we're burning incense at the shrine of Connie
Mack.
From the Battery to Harlem, rooters do a noisy dance
When they think of the Athletics and of Peerless Leader
Chance.

Where Lake Michigan is seething as the seasons hasten on,
Near the home of beef and bustle, near the home of Bath-
house John,
Gloom has settled, fans feel nettled, nerves are right on
edge like knives,
Fathers spank their little children, husbands beat their
trusting wives.
But the rooters of Manhattan have no tales of woe to tell
As they read their Sunday papers in the homes they love
so well.
Yes, they simply have to chuckle (you can get this at a
glance)
When they think of the Athletics and of Peerless Leader
Chance.

THE OLD ROOTER

I SAW them open yesterday, the Giants and their foemen,
I saw them field and hit and run, the fast men and the slow men;
The sky was just as blue above, the sod as green beneath
As when the old-time Giants used to frisk around the heath.

But Billy Gilbert wasn't there,
Old Second Baseman Billy,
Who used to pluck 'em from the air
And drive the bleachers silly.

I saw them open yesterday, I heard the turnstile clicking;
I heard the popcorn venders' cry and heard the tickers ticking.
The field was smooth as desert land, the multitude was shouting,
And to the heavens rose the sound of clouting, clouting, clouting.

But Michael Donlin wasn't there,
The Mike they used to cheer for.
"Come on, Mike, clout!" was all the shout
We used to have an ear for.

The Giants opened yesterday, an April day and sunny;
They played before a New York crowd of fashion, fun and money.
Grandstanders cheered, the young fans jeered; the crowd was standing, swaying,
It made me sigh for days gone by, when first I saw them playing.
But Dan McGann has gone away
And Dahlen with his science;
Mertes and Seymour couldn't stay—
The Giants opened yesterday
But not the old-time Giants.

"IF"

(Wireless Apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

IF John McGraw can hold his health and cunning,
If Matty's whip retains its fibre fine,
If Raymond doesn't keep the lager running
From Harlem to Tom Sharkey's down the line;
If Ames can shake the hoodoo that has gripped him
And bend them over as our Leon can,
If Larry Doyle will fire the boots that tripped him,
And field to suit the most exacting fan;

If Harold Chase can keep his boys together,
The veterans and the youngsters side by side,
If Vaughn and Ford and Quinn can safely weather
The season's storms and keep a winning stride;
If Chase remains the friskiest of friskers
Around the bag he plays so wondrous well;
If Edward Everett Bell will trim his whiskers,
New York may win two pennants—who can tell?

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